



## Northeast District Department of Health

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Health Department Urges Safety at Local Fairs**

Hand Washing and Proper Food Handling Minimize Illness Outbreaks

BROOKLYN - The Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) is ready for another busy fair season and offers fairgoers simple advice to enjoy the Brooklyn and Woodstock Fairs in a safe and healthy manner.

Every year, NDDH sanitarians inspect hundreds of food establishments at both fairs. All food vendors are required to obtain an NDDH Fair Permit, which must be displayed in a prominent location in the food booth during the entire fair. In addition, all food vendors must possess a current Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) certification or Food Awareness and Safety Training (FAST) certificate.

“NDDH inspects all food vendors at the fairs to assure compliance with the Public Health Code,” said Sue Starkey, NDDH Director of Health. “An event that brings hundreds of thousands of people to an area within a short time frame requires tremendous coordination. We remind fairgoers that they play a role in their health and safety. Fairgoers become food handlers when they purchase a food product. They too, should practice food safety so they reduce their risk of food-borne illness.”

In addition to food safety, NDDH encourages frequent hand washing or the use of hand sanitizers if hand washing facilities are unavailable. NDDH-sponsored signage throughout the fairgrounds promotes healthy fair habits.

The fairs have a long-standing tradition of providing fairgoers with plenty of fun, festivities, agricultural and animal exhibits, and food. NDDH partners with fair management to assure that fairgoers have every chance to avoid illness.

Every year in the United States, many people get sick after visiting an animal exhibit. Some of the most common harmful germs people get from animals at exhibits are *E.*

*coli*, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Salmonella*, but there are also many other types of germs that can spread between animals and people. Of particular concern are variant strains of Influenza.

During fair exhibition season, CDC monitors the occurrence of influenza caused by variant influenza A viruses. Some simple precautions can reduce the spread of variant influenza A viruses—these include:

- Visitors to fairs and exhibitions, particularly to the animal barns including pigs, should receive information about disease risks and recommendations to protect visitors and animals from illness.
- People who are at higher risk of developing serious complications from flu, including variant flu viruses, include children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant people, and people with certain long-term health conditions (like asthma and other lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions).

“The combination of thousands of people, food, animals and limited hand-washing facilities at the fairs creates a higher risk for bacterial and viral infection, including novel (new) disease,” said Starkey. “These infections can occur through food-borne illness or by interaction with farm animals. By increasing awareness of proper hand washing techniques and the use of hand-sanitizing stations, we hope to reduce the risk of illness for fairgoers. Fun at the fair starts with these simple health reminders.”

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#### Sidebar:

Enjoy a healthy fair experience by practicing these tips from NDDH:

- Keep food and drinks out of animal areas.
- Do not share your food or beverages with animals.
- Do not eat or drink raw (unpasteurized) dairy products.
- Consume fair food immediately to reduce the risk of illness. If that is not possible, do not let food sit out for more than two hours. On a hot day (90°F or higher), reduce this time to one hour.
- Be sure to put perishable items in a cooler or insulated bag.
- Never keep leftovers in a hot car.

For more information on food borne illness and staying healthy at animal exhibits, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/stay-healthy-animal-exhibits.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/exhibit-pigs-at-fairs.htm>